

Claims

1. A method of preparing an orange juice product, comprising the steps of:

harvesting a mid-season round orange cultivar selected from the group consisting of a Vernia  
5 cultivar, a Frost cultivar, or a combination of these mid-season cultivars, said harvesting step providing said mid-season orange cultivar which has its peak properties during a time period after the peak

10 harvesting season for early-to-mid season round orange fruit, including Hamlin orange fruit, and before the peak harvesting season for late season round orange fruit including Hughes Valencia and Rhode Red Valencia orange fruit, each peak harvesting season being within the growing territory of the  
15 harvesting step;

extracting juice from a volume of said mid-season round oranges of said harvesting step;

20 collecting the resulting extracted orange juice as a mid-season orange juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during said harvesting step which is greater than that of either early-to-mid season round orange fruit or late season round orange fruit harvested within the time period of said harvesting step; and

blending said collected mid-season orange juice with another orange juice source in order to provide a juice composition having a greater BAR value than and sensory qualities equivalent or superior to the sensory qualities of orange juice from either said

early-to-mid season round orange fruit juice or said late season orange fruit harvested during said harvesting season.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said harvesting step occurs in December to February in the northern hemisphere.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step blends early-to-mid season juice or late season juice harvested during said harvest season as the another orange juice source.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step blends a stored orange juice as the another orange juice source.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step incorporates up to about 80 volume percent of said extracted orange juice.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having overall quality sensory scores greater than those of Hamlin, Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia juices from orange fruit harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory green character which is less than that of Hughes

Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested  
at the time of said harvesting step.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory bitterness character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory feeling factors character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory sourness character which is less than that of Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory other citrus notes character which is less than that of Rhode Red Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory packaged notes character which is less than that of

Pineapple cultivar orange juice harvested at the time  
of said harvesting step.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step  
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory  
total orange character which is greater than that of  
Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of  
said harvesting step.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step  
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory raw  
orange character which is greater than that of  
Pineapple cultivar orange juice harvested at the time  
of said harvesting step.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step  
provides mid-season orange juice having a sensory  
sweet character which is greater than that of Hughes  
Valencia, Rhode Red Valencia or Pineapple cultivar  
orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting  
step.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step  
provides mid-season orange juice having a Color  
Number of at least 1 CN greater than Hamlin orange  
juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step  
provides mid-season orange juice having a Color  
Number of at least 2 CN greater than Hamlin orange  
juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein said harvesting step harvests Vernia cultivars, and said collecting step provides mid-season orange juice having a Color Number of at least 1 CN greater than Hughes Valencia orange juice harvested at the time of said harvesting step.  
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19. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step provides a juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during the months of December to February in the northern hemisphere which meets or exceeds the Orange Fruit Maturity Standards of the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.  
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20. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting step provides a juice having an acid value which is less than the acid value of juice harvested from said late season round orange fruit during the months of December to February in the northern hemisphere.  
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21. The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting provides an orange juice source having a Color Number of at least 36 CN units; and said blending blends at least about 5 volume percent, based on the volume of the orange juice, of said juice from the extracting step with said another orange juice source in order to provide an orange juice product having a Color Number in excess of 36 CN units.  
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22. The method of claim 1, wherein said blending step provides a not from concentrate orange juice.

23. A method of preparing an orange juice product, comprising the steps of:

harvesting Vernia cultivars which have neither peak properties during a time period after the peak  
5 harvesting season for early-to-mid season round orange fruit, including Hamlin orange fruit, and before the peak harvesting season for late season round orange fruit including Hughes Valencia and Rhode Red Valencia orange fruit, each peak harvesting  
10 season being within the growing territory of the harvesting step;

extracting juice from a volume of said Vernia round oranges of said harvesting step;

collecting the resulting extracted orange juice  
15 as a mid-season orange juice having a Brix-to-acid ratio (BAR) during said harvesting step which is greater than that of either said early-to-mid season round orange fruit or said late season round orange fruit harvested within the time period of said  
20 harvesting step; and

blending said collected mid-season orange juice with another orange juice source in order to provide a juice composition having a greater BAR value than and sensory qualities equivalent or superior to the  
25 sensory qualities of orange juice from either said early-to-mid season round orange fruit juice or said late season orange fruit harvested during said harvesting season.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step incorporates up to about 80 volume percent of said extracted orange juice.
25. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step provides mid-season orange juice having overall quality sensory scores greater than those of Hamlin, Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia juices from orange fruit harvested at the time of said harvesting step.
26. The method of claim 23, wherein said collecting provides an orange juice source having a Color Number of at least 36 CN units; and said blending blends at least about 5 volume percent, based on the volume of the orange juice, of said juice from the extracting step with said another orange juice source in order to provide an orange juice product having a Color Number in excess of 36 CN units.
27. The method of claim 23, wherein said blending step provides a not from concentrate orange juice.
28. An orange juice composition comprising a blend of:  
up to about 99 volume percent of a mid-season orange juice supply, based upon the total volume of the composition, said mid-season juice having a sensory profile equivalent or superior to that of 100 percent Hughes Valencia or Rhode Red Valencia orange

juice from fruit harvested at about the same time as fruit from which said mid-season juice originates;

10       at least about 1 percent by volume of an orange juice supply other than said mid-season orange juice supply, based upon the total volume of the composition; and

15       said fruit from which the mid-season fresh orange juice originates is a round orange cultivar selected from Vernia cultivars, Frost cultivars, or a combination of these mid-season cultivars.

29. The composition of claim 28, wherein said very early season juice comprises up to about 80 percent by volume of the composition, based upon the total volume of the composition.

30. The composition of claim 28, wherein said mid-season cultivar is a Vernia round orange cultivar.